



From the Desk of **FATHER JULIUS**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Grace and Peace!

The liturgy this Sunday presents us with the powerful image of a vineyard to describe God's relationship with His people. God has lovingly planted, protected, and cared for His vineyard, but He expects it to produce good fruit. The important pastoral message is this: God does not ask us merely to admire His vineyard; He asks us to get to work in it, to cultivate it and to produce fruit.

In the First Reading, the prophet Isaiah gives us the beautiful Song of the Vineyard. God has done everything necessary for His vineyard. He planted it on fertile ground, protected it, and patiently expected it to produce good grapes. Instead, it produced wild grapes. Isaiah is speaking about the people of Israel, who, despite all the blessings and care they had received from God, failed to bear the fruits of justice, faithfulness, and righteousness. In the Second Reading, St. Paul shifts our attention from the vineyard itself to the Christian life. He encourages us not to be consumed by anxiety, but to bring everything to God through prayer, petition, and thanksgiving.

In the Gospel, Our Lord develops Isaiah's vineyard image in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. The landowner represents God; the vineyard represents His people; the servants represent the prophets; and the son represents Jesus Himself. The parable was originally directed toward the religious leaders of Jesus' time. But the message does not end there. As Christians, we, too, must ask ourselves whether we are faithful tenants of the vineyard God has entrusted to us. That is why, at the beginning of this week, it is worth asking: Are our lives bearing good fruit? Are we producing fruit in our private lives, in our families, in the vineyard of the Church, and in the society in which we live?

Jesus has given us His Church, and through the Church, He has given us everything necessary to become fruitful Christians: Sacred Scripture and Tradition, the Sacraments, the witness of the saints, the ministry of priests and religious, and the grace to grow in holiness. We bear good fruit when we encourage one another in faith, when we make a daily commitment to prayer, when we practice charity, when we forgive, when we serve others, and when we seek to sanctify the ordinary circumstances of our lives.

Our parish, our families, our marriages, our priesthood, our work, and our personal faith are all portions of God's vineyard entrusted to us. Over these past two Sundays, Jesus has continued to use the image of the vineyard to speak to us about our relationship with God. He provides the soil, the vine, the press, and the tower. He provides everything we need. We are blessed indeed! But He also expects something from us: our labor, our faithfulness and gratitude, and good fruit.

Perhaps the most important question for each of us this week is: "If God were to come today looking for the fruit of His vineyard, what would He find in me?"

A blessed Sunday!